

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society

REPORT

Report #34, November-December 1980

Focus on Women in Mennonite Business/Industry

The task of the bi-monthly *Report* is to focus on specific concerns related, and of interest, to Mennonite women. In the past, many themes and issues have been discussed that have made women conscious of one another's problems and experiences. It is this growing awareness of a powerful, legitimate force in society that is contributing to changes for women and men, prompting us to look into other hitherto unexplored areas of activity. This issue of the *Report* will focus on women in Mennonite business and industry, a topic that, to my knowledge, has not yet been dealt with in any Mennonite publication.

Many of us are aware of Mennonite Industries and Business Associates (MIBA) which serves as a sounding board and platform for dealing with ethical and social questions faced by Mennonite businessmen. Their publication *Marketplace* and their conferences have drawn contributors and speakers of considerable renown. Until now this organization has not examined the female work-force in their midst, nor questions related to them such as career goals, promotion possibilities, equal pay for equal work, etc. These may all be serious considerations in Mennonite industries, but they have never been addressed on any platform. Therefore, it is very gratifying that MIBA is taking an active interest in this issue and that Calvin Redekop, director of MIBA has contributed an article.

Collecting data on women in Mennonite businesses was not an easy assignment. As coordinator of this issue, I will be the first to admit that this initial attempt does not qualify as scholarly research. The hope is that it might provide the necessary impetus for further study and investigation.

In order to get some information on women in Mennonite business, two simple questionnaires were designed; one for employees of Mennonite business/industry and the other for self-employed women. These were given to members of the Task Force for further distribution. Eighteen questionnaires were returned by employees of Mennonite businesses and 19 by women who operate their own business. A summary of the findings and copies of the questionnaire appear in this *Report* (see page seven).

Nor was it easy to track down women in top management positions in Mennonite business and industry.

Apparently not many get into the upper echelons of management. One exception is Esther Reimer, comptroller of Kitchen Craft of Canada, Ltd., a large company based in Winnipeg with branch offices in Calgary and Edmonton. Mary M. Enns, a Winnipeg journalist, has contributed the story on Esther. An attempt to get such information from a very large Mennonite industry in the United States brought no response to my two inquiries.

In studying the responses to the questionnaires, the excitement and enthusiasm of women operating their own business (alone or in partnership) became evident. Darlene Siemens, co-owner of Cal-Real of Fresno, was asked to contribute an article representing women in this category.

The purpose of this issue is to make us aware of the large female population involved in one aspect or another of Mennonite business. This small sampling is a first attempt at disclosure; nevertheless, it is a foundation for a women's network in yet another area of their activity, the business world. Mennonite women engaged in business will welcome the support and assistance they might receive from other women sharing their experiences. The article by Eleanor Dueck, entitled "Toward Management: The Journey of Two Women" provides advice that many will find useful.

It is hoped that serious consideration will be given to the contributions of women in Mennonite businesses and that there be a recognition and inclusion of their business experience and their needs in the program of MIBA.—*Mary Dueck, compiler of feature material for this Report*

MIBA and the Role of Women

by Calvin Redekop

In order to speak to the topic in the title, I will give a brief history of Mennonite Industries and Business Associates (MIBA). What follows in the next eight paragraphs are a reprint, with some adaptations, of a history written for the 11th annual MIBA meeting which convened in October 1980 in Goshen, Ind. (where, by the way, it was born in 1976).

MIBA did not emerge as a newborn infant without parents; it is a continuation of the Committee on

Economic and Social Relations, established in 1939 (originally called the Committee on Industrial Relations). Other organizations such as the Mennonite Community Association and Mennonite Mutual Aid also contributed to the birth of MIBA. Among the leaders were Guy F. Hershberger, Abe Hallman, Ralph Hernley, J. Winfield Fretz, Howard Raid.

The earlier emphases included challenging "the brotherhood to find the way of Christian ethics in its economic and social relations" (*Mennonite Encyclopedia*, p. 651). Increased transition from rural to urban residence, from closed community to diaspora, the increased alienation from the church of those leaving agricultural pursuits—these convinced many people that a new era was emerging which needed a new effort. Though I had personally been involved in numerous activities of the above-mentioned organization, a new impetus came for me when President Mininger invited me to express my dreams for the Mennonite Church when I joined the Goshen College faculty in 1967.

I raised my concern about the increasing estrangement between the Mennonite Church and its businesspeople. Mininger encouraged me to work on the ideas involved. "Institute on Church and Industry: Some Preliminary Observations" was written in the spring of 1968. Several members of the Goshen College Board of Overseers, notably Eric Sauder and Bob Gotwals, were very supportive of the ideas, maintaining that the growing rift between the colleges and businesspeople needed to be healed.

A "Study Committee on Church and Industry" was formed. I was asked to write a document for further discussion; it was presented in July 1968, entitled "Statement of Purposes and Organization, Church, Business and Industry Association," and was adopted at the next meeting (November 1968). The study committee thereupon felt that its job was accomplished, and disbanded in favor of a committee that would represent the entire Mennonite spectrum and the geography of Canada and the United States. The first board was composed of Ross Bender, A.A. DeFehr, Peter Enns, Robert Gotwals, Carl Kreider, Ivan Martin, Stanley Pankratz, Erie Sauder, Lewis Strite, and Frank Ulrich. Frank Ulrich served as president, and I as executive secretary.

An organizational meeting was held in October 1969, with about 100 businesspeople present. A vocal student contingent, mainly from Goshen College, was also present. The purposes and structure of the proposed organization were presented and unanimously adopted. The original proposal called for a business administration curriculum to be established at Goshen College, a "Center for Church, Industry, and Business," also at Goshen College and a continuing education program. Because the organization was perceived as serving the entire Mennonite community, the specifics pertaining to Goshen College were deleted, and the continuing education aspects of the charter were designated as the focus of the organization, called Church, Industry, and Business Association (CIBA).

CIBA began immediately to plan for annual meetings

and regional seminars. A total of ten annual meetings have been conducted, as well as at least 40 regional seminars (including college campus). The *CIBA Newsletter* began in December 1970 as a one sheet quarterly.

Preparing for the Marriage

Because it appeared for a while as though CIBA was aimed only at the successful larger business owners, an association called Mennonite Business Associates (MBA) was formed at Laurelvile Mennonite Church Center in 1973. MBA focused its activities for the "service station operator" but discovered that responses came from the same clientele which CIBA was attracting. It soon became obvious to both organizations that activities were being duplicated, so in 1975 memoranda were circulated in both organizations suggesting merger. The annual meeting of CIBA, MBA and Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) culminated in the official merger of MBA and CIBA into MIBA, with Erland Waltner preaching the marriage sermon entitled "A United Witness in the Business World" (November 1976).

The work of MIBA has grown and prospered, and it is my belief that it has a firm hold on important issues. Whether MIBA will continue in its present direction, change, or even take sick and die is for the future to unfold. But through its predecessors and its own history, there appears to be a concern that the witness of the church be enhanced in the world.

Now about Women and MIBA...

It is immediately apparent that women are not referred to in the above account; nor does it appear that women have figured prominently in the creation and the activities of MIBA. But before I discuss how women relate to MIBA, I will usurp the privilege of a personal disclaimer. The minutes will show that as executive secretary, and later as the editor of the *Newsletter* and now of the *Marketplace*, I have repeatedly called for and urged the participation of women in the structure of the organization and in its program. I consider it a bit of personal victory when through manipulation of some familial strings we were able to have Ellen Hartman serve as chair of the annual meeting of MIBA in 1977. In my editorial in the December 1978 *Newsletter* I repeated the theme discussed many times earlier: "One of the continuing concerns is the relative lack of female involvement in MIBA and MEDA...Howard Cressman, chairman of the nominating committee and member of the MIBA board, publicly committed the nominating process to place the names of several women on the slate for election to the board of directors. This will help provide the structure by which women can participate in all facets of the organization."

Another personal dimension which will provide for a bit of analysis below was the planning for the joint symposium held in the spring of 1980 at Conrad Grebel College, sponsored by the college, MEDA and MIBA. I made my usual speech about having women on the program (we succeeded in having two women on the planning committee), and the planning committee readily agreed to the idea. After running through all the

suggested names without any success, the program again reverted to an all male show.

A Personal Analysis

My analysis of the role of women in MIBA is strictly my own, and I beg forgiveness in advance if I misinterpret the many others who have been involved. The purpose of MIBA has been to serve as a "brotherhood approach to effective witness and service in the church and marketplace" (Brochure, 1980). There has been no distinction between male and female, and all persons have been welcomed into membership and participation. It is true that the board membership to the present has been entirely male, and the first woman has yet to be presented on the slate of candidates. Women have chaired discussions and have been on planning committees for regional and annual meetings. I have no statistics available to back me on this, but I believe that at least one-third of the attenders across the board at all the meetings have been women. Very few major addresses, however, have been given by women. The address in Goshen in October 1980 by Miriam Cressman of Cambridge, Ont., is I believe, the first presented by a female.

There has been no aggressive mood on the part of the boards, or of the convention goers, to publicly solicit greater participation of women, although the Cambridge meeting in 1978 did discuss the topic, and there was considerable public support by at least a proportion of the membership. It needs to be said, however, that the topic came to a focus through active concern of several women who brought the issue on the floor.

It is my observation that the business community is theologically open or committed to the idea of women's participation, but that it is psychologically and institutionally still resistant to following through. Thus the average businessman is totally in line with the equality of male and female before God. He is further very much aware that in his own business his wife or other females are often the stabilizing force or even the backbone of the success. (I have heard the above testimony numerous times from some of the most successful businessmen) But psychologically most males have been unable to put their convictions into practice because of past conditioning. Further, the structural reality of having women sit on boards on an equal footing with men would leave many a brother a bit nervous. To be the first to suggest a female for a board is to raise all sorts of questions in the minds of modest and simple Mennonites! Mennonite men are not much more adept at relating to women in unusual roles than are men in general; in fact, a case could be made that they are less

adept because of the strong teaching on women's subordination to men.

A further structural variable is the fact that Mennonite families are still traditionally organized, and for a woman to fly off to Pittsburgh for a MIBA board meeting and to leave her husband home with a child in diapers, or with three teenagers, might send reverberations through the Mennonite grapevine that would tear it up by the roots. The professional woman is just beginning to cast a hazy shadow over the citadel of male institutions, and it will take a bit of time if an upheaval is to be avoided. The Mennonite psyche cannot masticate too great a morsel at one time, for indigestion can easily erupt; witness the divorce rate.

But reason beckons us to look at all the dimensions of the issue, and at the risk of slinking back into the citadel mentioned above, let me suggest that women themselves contribute to the problem and are at least half of the solution. I feel relatively secure because I can appeal to the findings of a feminist sociologist whose study of some leading business corporations in the United States revealed that in the face of corporate, group and institutional commitments to integration, individually women preferred to stay in the secure but subordinate roles of being a private secretary for the boss which included making coffee and arranging for the boss's private travels (*Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation*, 1977).

Space does not permit an adequate analysis, but it seems clear to me that the relationship of women to MIBA is a reflection of the larger social system; it does not preclude, however, that MIBA could become a leader in the integration, and it is my hope that this can be the case. It is my belief that it should happen earlier than in the church for example, because: 1) business does not have the millstone of the theological interpretations of female standing; 2) many women have been, and continue to be, leading personages in the conducting of business affairs and it would thus be only natural to be active in MIBA affairs; 3) a lay organization like MIBA is freer to innovate and change, especially because it is composed of business people who are ostensibly the most progressive and experimental of the community (my own experience indicates that to be a bit overstated, for some businessmen are incredibly conservative); 4) finally, I am discovering that many business enterprises are "mom and pop" or family concerns, and it is unnatural to assume that when it comes to social, professional and even religious issues and conferences, the female contingent should suddenly become demure and shrink behind the veil.

Calvin Redekop wrote this article in October 1980. He is director of Mennonite Industries and Business Associates.

Mixing My Professions

by Darlene Siemens

Prior to our marriage in 1958, I had worked four years and assumed I would continue working. In our new

relationship I had a desire to share in everything including earning money. I loved the excitement. It was

a real challenge for me to work, keep up our tiny apartment, cook, bake and still have time with my husband. When our son and later our daughter came into our family, I limited my work as a bank teller to part time.

I have always loved mothering and being a housewife. God gave me a real peace in mixing the two. I was usually home with my children more than away in their early years. I could also leave my jeans and apron to be in the "dressed up" business world I also loved. I did not love one role more than the other. God used me in leading my son to the Lord. I was also able to lead several other women to the Lord over the years. I could feel God working through me in both areas of my life.

When my children were very young, I began working in the church: teaching vacation Bible school, organizing and teaching Pioneer Girls, and working with church visitation. I have a conviction that if God gives strength and abilities to work at a job outside the home, God also gives strength and abilities to work in the church. I don't believe God's work is to be done only by those who have nothing else to do.

As chair of Pioneer Girls I was also on the church Christian Education Board. Working with church administration in that capacity was of great interest to me. I worked on that board for about ten years when I was elected to the Pacific District Christian Education Board, the first woman so elected. I'm not a "women's libber," nor am I threatened by working with men. It seemed very natural for me to be working on a board where we were each being used of God for the abilities and gifts we had. Because of my business background I was not uncomfortable with a committee of 11 men and myself. They were great with making me feel "one of them." Now and then there are comments made regarding a woman being on the committee. I trust these are complimentary of my abilities and I purposefully don't take them any other way.

In my business world today, I am a real estate broker, 41 years old and co-owner of a large real estate office. We have 30 sales associates working for our firm. I have had one year of junior college education, real estate school and am a graduate of the National Realtors Institute.

My job is that of office manager. I interview new and experienced salespeople wanting to associate with our office. I am part of our extensive training program. I am the relocation director for our national relocation program. I am one of two brokers helping to give professional help to any of our sales associates as the need arises. As one of the owners, I work closely with the advertising, the budget and management of our secretary and bookkeeper. I also continue to work with buyers and sellers who come as referrals to me.

When I came into real estate ten years ago, I did not have a goal of owning part of the office I started in as a sales associate. I have been described as being "petite and feminine." Apparently not the image of a career person, particularly in the field of real estate. Some

remarked that surely I could risk losing my husband and family for the "love of money."

However, the negative reactions acted only to inspire my positive outlook. I saw my new career as being very compatible to my husband's business. He is a residential home building contractor. My interest in floor plan design and interior decorating is also an advantage.

My husband encouraged me to go into real estate. We talked about all the advantages and disadvantages. I also had a strong feeling that God directed me completely into this new venture. This conviction gave me the confidence necessary for the dramatic change of life style.

Our children were only eight and ten years old at that time. My new job gave me the flexible hours necessary to come home when they came home from school. This was not difficult for me to work out; as far as all my clients were concerned, I had a 3 p.m. appointment. This often turned out to be a bigger advantage than I realized as people soon began to assume I must be a good realtor if I was "that busy" with appointments!

I feel such joy to be helping people buy and sell their homes. It is very important for me to have my clients completely happy, understanding exactly what happens when they decide to buy or sell a home.

Sunday is always reserved for church and my family. There were occasional out of town clients I worked with on a Sunday afternoon and the traditional "open house" from time to time. However, I had told my family that it was going to be more important for me to continue to put God and them first in my life, even if I lost a sale on account of it. That decision has helped me many times over the years; working with people constantly can become demanding.

Being a realtor involved unusual circumstances: showing homes to men only, traveling out of town with others for seminars and continuing education classes, dining with men are some examples. Decisions need to be made regarding all of these kinds of things. If I let all of these "possibilities" overcome me with worry, I would be unable to function in a business-like way. I am accountable to God and to myself and always conduct myself in a professional way. If my husband did not fully approve of my job encounters, responsibilities and obligations I would not be in the position I am in today.

Sharing all that I do has helped my family to understand my job. It is important to sit down with the whole family and re-evaluate time scheduled, work load and responsibilities from time to time. My husband and children have been willing to adjust to helping more at home when we discuss all of our activities and the benefits we all receive from my job. Being sensitive to my husband's and children's needs has been very helpful. When I make time for them, they are willing to be considerate of my unexpected obligations.

I am also very conscious of the power of prayer in my life. I know that God has taken me to where I am, one step at a time. My list of answered prayer would match

A Woman in the Mennonite Business World

by Mary M. Enns

Years ago when Esther Reimer, newly out of high school, stepped into her father's business at J.P. Riediger and Sons of Morden, Man., she was interested in one thing: bookkeeping. She'd had no training for this job but she was anxious to learn, and now says: "I give my brother, Jake Riediger, credit for setting my feet on a firm foundation there. By the time I had worked there for seven years I knew this was the direction I wanted to go."

Today she is the comptroller or head bookkeeper for Kitchen Craft of Canada, Ltd., a Winnipeg plant employing 155 people with another 35 in branch offices in Calgary and Edmonton. They mass produce modular kitchen cabinets and distribute into Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and are now opening a market in North Dakota and Minnesota. This company was established in 1971 by John Rademaker, its president and marketing director, and Herb Buller, secretary treasurer and manager of the plant and finances. Esther, who had worked for them as a bookkeeper on a part-time basis for two-and-one-half years when they operated Midland Concrete Products, has been with this rapidly growing company since its inception.

Twenty-one years ago when she and her husband, Dave, now a teacher, and their family moved to Winnipeg from Morden, Esther helped him in his photography

continued from page 4

the miles on my car. My dependence on God to help me with all the many details of our business as well as major decisions has been a necessity. I need to rely on prayer especially when I handle sensitive personal problems within the office. The worst of these would be firing or "career adjustment" as we prefer to call it.

Working with as many people as I do in a sales oriented business requires great sensitivity. Being authoritative is one of my natural abilities; this has made me develop insight on when to "tone down." Some women older than myself (or men) would resent how I said or did things if I were not careful in my approach or attitude. The creditability I have earned in sales work and management, the amount of further real estate education I have received, and the desire to love and to understand people have helped me to maintain good relationships with men and women of all ages.

I owe many "bouquets of flowers" to people in and out of my business world: people who helped me to grow, encouraged me, trained me and gave me responsibility; people who loved me for who I was and who took time to say "thank you;" people who cared enough to say "slow down." I am particularly grateful to those who prayed with me and for me. I hope that I can help others as so many have helped me.

Darlene Siemans is a real estate broker and co-owner of Cal-Real, Fresno, Calif.

business. Because Dave was also studying she took in boarders to help make ends meet. Now that she is working full time we wondered whether a woman with a family can successfully combine these duties with the heavy demands of a business career. Without hesitation Esther says: "You can, but only if you have the full cooperation and backing of your husband and then your children. I couldn't have done it without Dave's unfailing support."

Responsibility has been good for the children. Work benefits have included son Bill's (22) involvement in the plant since age 14, beginning with simple sanding jobs and progressing to part-time electrical work. Son Bob (25) works as a salesman for Kitchen Craft in Calgary. "Mostly I try to leave my business worries at the office," says Esther. Supper time is discussion time. And often when Esther goes to bed Geraldine (17) will slip in to talk a bit.

Esther's business experience has given her a sense of confidence in her approach to people. We asked whether there are conflicts for a Christian woman in the business world? "Yes, there are, but these are minimized when you work in a setup with Christian businessmen." How has her business involvement affected her church commitment? "Here is where I have had to let go a few things, but I can support Dave in his commitments," she says.

What satisfaction is it to have become First Lady in a large and growing corporation? "It is humbling to me that God has given me the grace and wisdom to handle it. When things don't work out it becomes a matter of prayer for me. I'm grateful that the company has given me the opportunity to prove myself and the trust in my efforts in trying to reach my goal."

Is it tougher for a woman to be a success in the Mennonite business world? "It is more difficult for a Mennonite to accept a woman in business. I've had to work hard to prove myself." Herb Buller speaks to this issue: "I think a woman in this situation has a better chance today than she did five years ago. However, the Mennonite businessman still operates from the premise that the man is in charge and the woman is responsible to him. But the younger employers have been through the new school system and there is certainly development in this area." Esther feels that, considering the fact that she has worked her way into her present situation, her salary compares very favorably with that of a man in an equal position, though some of the men have a few extra benefits.

Prejudices in the business world? "Yes some, but I've learned to cope with these," says Esther. "It has helped me most to discuss it with my husband. He's been a sounding board and has given me good advice." What are some of the difficulties she has encountered? "I'm not too worried with regard to factual errors. And in situations of judgment-making I've acquired a measure of security. I know what is expected of me. And,

importantly, office politics have never been a major issue here."

We wondered how those people who work closely with Esther feel about this association. "I have to be able to rely on Esther," says Herb Buller, "and I'm confident of her abilities after having worked with her for 11 years. As head bookkeeper she is responsible for development of all financial reports. The company has developed from zero to where it is today and it has been a learning process. With her background in bookkeeping she was a valuable asset to us when we began here together. She is excellent at maintaining a set of books. If, however, she would wish to extend her function to include responsibilities of planning and projections in this rapidly growing company she would need to acquire more formal, financial training."

What difficulties arise with the sorting out of priorities when a woman in this position is also a wife and mother? Buller adds: "We've always tried to be sensitive about that and have at times made allowances. On the other hand we can't accept a lower work standard because of that consideration. She made the choice to assume the responsibilities here and these must be

carried out. And they have been." John Warkentine, credit manager, has worked closely with Esther for four years. He says: "Esther is outgoing and cooperative. Both of us are open to suggestions and she does not project her way as the only right way. It has presented no problems whatever to me having a woman in a superior position, here."

Bev Fox, in payroll and secretarial duties, attests: "Between Esther and myself we have always managed to get the necessary things accomplished, supporting each other fully. She has helped me get ahead. In her job there are a great many demands and a lot of work pressure. When she has reacted too quickly and gotten uptight we have always been able to discuss it. What Esther has achieved is admirable; she has taken the first step on very touchy ground, breaking the way for other women in the company."

Possible advice to other women seeking to achieve a successful melding of family and business? "Make sure," says Esther, "that you are in total agreement with your husband in this. And then, don't ever let him feel that you are more important or in any way superior."

Mary M. Enns is a journalist from Winnipeg.

Toward Management: THE JOURNEY OF TWO WOMEN

by Eleanor Dueck and Jane Cors

Two well-dressed, coiffured women have landed on Planet Sideboard. They crawl out of the nosecone of the rocket to behold a new world. Their mission: to become effective business managers. They carry overnight bags



"This may look silly to you,
but my daughter started out this way and now she owns
a chain of fast-food restaurants!"

stuffed to the brim with little items that Society has packed for them. Items like: women are emotional rather than intellectual beings; concentrate on packaging yourselves for consumption; look your best at all times; when in conversation with a man, always let him have the final word; forget yourself.

Mr. J.J. Johnson is approaching with an extended hand.

"Are we supposed to shake?"

"I'm not, my nail polish is chipped. You shake."

"Welcome to my world, ladies," says J.J. winking. "Follow me and I will teach you a new language and give you a map to get around. Good luck!"

In order to progress as a manager in the business world, we soon found that we had to leave most of what Society had given us behind and take on some new "thought." We had to move from emotional subjectivity to intellectual objectivity. When problems came up we blamed ourselves. We tended to do the work ourselves rather than delegate tasks. If we did all the work ourselves, we would not worry about mistakes being made.

Ha! After a couple of 80 hour weeks, we asked ourselves, "Is this the way the life of a manager must be?" No! No! Instead of doing the work ourselves we must teach our employees to cope with problems and emergencies, show them how the job is done, work with them a short time, correct mistakes, then let them master the job independently and grow in it. We were available at all times for questions and suggestions from them.

One tool we found useful in acquiring objectivity was a regular performance review. This consisted of a conference held with the individual employee to define

tasks, goals, accomplishments and problem areas. We had each employee rate him/herself in numerous categories and then we compared their ratings with ours.

Earlier we would have dreaded sitting down with employees and expressing what we thought to be their weak and strong points for fear of hurting their feelings. However, each review produced such positive results that we actually began to look forward to them as a great time for problem solving and complimenting employees individually. To the employees' and our surprise we usually rated them higher than they themselves did.

With time we began to see management as a process which results in a person who not only has more to give, but is less compulsively dependent upon others. A mother motivated at home by being needed may feel unwanted as the last child leaves home. This is con-

trasted to the ongoing "family" in business management which continually provides a feeling of being needed with the stimulation evoked by interaction with peers, and employees.

About this time, J.J. came around to see how everything was going. We assured him we had some wrinkles to iron out yet but that we were working on them. He was pleased and said he would be having a regular meeting with us to give us a chance to discuss changes and other particular questions about the business. The processes we learned and the techniques we applied helped us to become more professional and gave us confidence in women as management.

Mission accomplished!

Eleanor Dueck and Jane Cors are managers of The Sideboard (restaurant and gift shop) in Elkhart, Ind.

Responses to Questionnaires on Women in Mennonite Business/Industry

Sample Questionnaire a), Employees in Mennonite Business/Industry

- I. Employer: Name or Type of Business
- II. Age of Employee
- III. Salary
- IV. Length of employment with this company
- V. Present Position
- VI. Title
- VII. Responsibilities
- VIII. Education beyond High School
- IX. Comment on your career goals: Job or Long-term career.
- X. List promotions, if any.
- XI. Have you been bypassed for promotion? No? Yes? If yes, why?
- XII. Have you rejected opportunity for promotion? No? Yes? If yes, why?
- XIII. Have you faced discriminatory practices? Explain.
- XIV. Assess your own abilities and attitudes:
 - Self-confident or fear of failure
 - Assertive or non-assertive
 - Self-assured or low self-esteem
- XV. Do you have supervision over others? Number.
- XVI. Do you supervise men?
- XVII. Has this presented problems? Comment.

I. Employees representing the following businesses responded: doctors' offices, nursing homes, restaurants, retail store, furniture company, printing industry, business offices of several colleges.

II. The youngest employee was 21, the oldest was 60. Median age was 40 and average age was 41.

III. Two respondents listed their wages as \$3.68 and \$5.95 an hour, respectively. One employee received an

see fourth paragraph and following on page one of this Report for an introduction to these questionnaires.

annual salary of \$6,000, another \$8,000, two were in the \$10,000 range, one received over \$11,000, 12 received approximately \$13,000 a year. Only two received earned more than \$15,000 annually, one is getting \$17,000 and the other \$21,000.

IV. The length of employment with their company varied from less than one year to 35 years, the average was eight years.

V, VI, VII. Employees' titles were generally administrative assistants or secretary to an executive. Others listed were: technician, activities co-ordinator, business manager, nurses' supervisor, manager of a department.

VIII. Most of the respondents did not have a college degree. One woman was working on an M.B.A.; she was also receiving the highest salary. Besides nurses, two other employees stated that they had a graduate degree.

IX. To the majority of respondents, work was "just a job" with no career goals. Some were working because of family responsibilities, others were planning to retire, several were hoping to continue their education in the future. One woman hoped to get into middle-management, one desired to go into personnel counseling. The woman working on her M.B.A. plans to operate her own business and do some college teaching. One administrative assistant viewed her job as a career.

X, XI. Most women had received some promotions in keeping with their qualifications. Some frankly admitted that they had gone as far as they could with their present qualifications; for others there was no opportunity for promotion. One woman felt she had not been

bypassed for promotion since "women have always had the open lead in the secretarial world." One sensed here that there was a narrow circumscribed area of work reserved for women for which men did not compete. One woman was denied the opportunity of training in certain equipment.

XII, XIII. To the question of having faced discriminatory practices, most responded that they had not. Other comments: "One can make legal appeals concerning discrepancies in rates of pay for like work, but how does one deal with subtly justified practices of hiring men to "run machinery" and paying them more for it than women who are paid for different (however equally skilled) work?" "I have often been told that if I weren't doing such a good job I wouldn't have my job because I'm a woman." "There are [those] around who tend to think it's the men who should do the important work and make the decisions while the secretaries should carry the coffee, answer the phone, jump when called and by all means never disagree with a decision made on a higher level. We're working on it." The same employee says, "my boss is one of the best." Only three women had rejected opportunities for promotion, one because she didn't want to relocate, and two because they didn't want additional responsibilities.

XIV. When assessing their own abilities and attitudes, eight women stated that they were self-confident, assertive and self-assured. Four believed they were non-assertive, five lacked self-esteem and three suffered from fear of failure.

XV, XVI, XVII. Some women had supervision over as many as 12, 15 or 48 employees. Very few supervised men, and if they did, it presented no problems. One commented, "It would if I did."

Sample Questionnaire b), Self-Employed Women

1. Type of Business
2. Age
3. Education beyond High School
4. Number of employees
5. Do you employ men?
6. Does their supervision present problems? Please specify.
7. How are you related and accepted by your business peers? Please specify.
8. Are your administrative and supervisory gifts appreciated and called upon in the church? Please specify.
9. How did you get started in business? Comment.
10. Considerations to make when going into business.

1. Types of business establishments owned and operated by women: bookstores, restaurant, travel agency (partnership with husband), real estate companies, fabric shops, schools of music, catering business, laundromat, ladies' wear boutique, yarn craft shops and an industrial and commercial construction company.

2. The youngest businesswoman was 37, the oldest was 70. The median age was 48 and the average age was 50.

3. Half of the women had a bachelor's degree, only one had had no education beyond high school. The woman who didn't even get her high school education has 130 employees. She says, "After three stores my husband joined me, and after five stores our son joined us; the three of us are now equal partners." They own 20 stores.

4, 5, 6. Most businesses had only a handful of employees, others employed 10, 15, 25, 45 or 130. Few employed men, and if they did, it did not present problems. Two women, co-owners of their import business, laughingly stated that they supervise "only our husbands. They consider the store a nuisance sometimes and a blessing at others—especially at tax time!"

7. Most found that they related well to their business peers and were accepted. Some comments: "My business peers, predominantly male, respect me for operating a viable, profit-making business." "The first few years were rough; not many of my business peers took me seriously. But after 16 years and 20 stores we relate very well." "It is commonly accepted that women are very successful in real estate." "Sometimes they [business peers] are surprised to find that I am the "Buerge" in Buerge Construction Co!" "My business is generally acknowledged as the most progressive, most attractive, and the best-managed in the area!" "Our business peers tolerate us—we are on speaking terms, but not chummy."

8. Most of the women responded that their administrative and supervisory gifts were not called upon in the church. Some frankly admitted that they didn't have the time nor the interest to become involved in an administrative or leadership capacity in the church. Several women were involved in the Christian education program, radio and broadcast committee, as Sunday school supervisors, and rarely as board members of a large constituency.

One woman with a B.Sc. degree commented: "Most of the men in leadership positions [from my congregation] have no college experience and feel threatened by my skills." Another stated: "I expect Mennonites feel more comfortable with men."

9. How did some of these women get started in business? Grace Warkentin, owner of Grace's Clothes Cupboard, started on the premise that a fashion boutique would be an asset to the community. She adds, "I rented a two-story, 100-year-old stone house in the business district, laid the groundwork by obtaining a \$25,000 line of credit and hunted up major suppliers of fashions in Montreal, Canada. The rest was easy; I buy and sell well. By offering wardrobe counseling personal assistance for seasonal coordination, and by putting on a few fashion shows my business has a flare not found in department stores, e.g., personal touch. My identifier, "Grace's," means a whole lot more than just a clothing store. My customers gain self-confidence along with style. My father had a retail store, and I learned a lot from him about thrift." Grace is also much involved with mental health. She is presently on the National Board of Directors of the Canadian Mental Health Association, the first Mennonite, male or fe-

male, to achieve that status. In 1978 she served as the Task Force Chairperson for Organizational Development and was Chairperson for the Standards Committee for all of Canada, developing new standards after 60 years of incorporation. Her peers on the board are psychiatrists, professors, corporate lawyers and executives. With this background, Grace says her first love is writing. She has had poetry published in the *Canadian Yearbook of Poetry* and in *Mennonite Literary Society*. Her husband, who is president of a Chrysler dealership, supports the various endeavors of his wife who does not have her "feet cemented in a kitchen."

What do other women say about their start in business? "I guess it was a strong ambition to prove to myself that I could earn as much money as a man in the business world" ...She got started "without capital, without experience, just a dream and lots of determination and desire to do it successfully and create the most unique place in the world." ... "Always wanted to start a restaurant. No teaching job available...so I just decided to start a restaurant."... "It was the fulfillment of several years of planning and dreaming and a friend provided financial assistance in order to realize the dream."..."I worked for a caterer for about nine years. She retired and I bought out her business. I have always enjoyed cooking and baking and this job became a real challenge to me. I do all kinds of parties, from small ones of 25 to big dinners of 600 to 1,000."..."I just wanted to run a store—so I found a partner, found a space, and found some money."..."I decided our town needed a yardage shop, so after looking into the matter for about nine months I started one from scratch. I did not take over an existing business. Two-and-one-half years later I switched to mainly bridal. I wanted to have an established business to step into when I'm too old to teach school."...One woman took over the business after her husband's death. Several women are partners with their husbands, and one woman took over her father's business upon his retirement.

10. Gleaned from their responses are the following considerations women should take when going into business for themselves: 1) Set long-term goals. 2) Consider the financial resources available. 3) Assess your management skills. 4) Consider the amount of risk you can handle. 5) Consider the long hours, the amount of time you want to devote to your business. 6) Consider your family needs. 7) Recognize the competitive nature of business dealings. 8) Realize the importance that your physical appearance and your business manner play in the success of your endeavor.

Summary

Although one would hesitate to draw many definite conclusions from these questionnaires, a few general observations should be made.

It appears that in the case of the women employees, the lower the education and the lower the position in the company, the more likely the work was viewed as "just a job." Retirement looked attractive for those in their fifties, and some planned to quit working as soon as a financial burden had been alleviated, like putting the last child through college. The women viewing their

work as a career usually had a bachelor's or a master's degree and were "managers" and involved to some degree in planning and policy-making. They exuded a sense of satisfaction and took pride in their achievements.

It was surprising that so few had experienced any difficulties when working with men. One reason may be that very few women actually supervise men. Another reason may be that women are so comfortable with men as "bosses" that they view this as the norm, therefore, are not competitive and consequently don't run into difficulties.

A compulsive drive and the need to achieve was much more evident in the self-employed group. They were the risk-takers with long-range plans, out to succeed in a man's world. These women were more mature, and one sensed that owning their own business was a longed-for dream, finally come true. Whereas the employee group talked of "gearing down" at age 50, the average age of the self-employed women was 50. Some were definitely "gearing up" as was the case with the school teacher who planned to step into her established business sometime in her fifties.

It is unfortunate that so few of these women were using their special gifts and skills within the context of the church. At times they weren't interested in taking on extra responsibilities, but more frequently it was because they were not invited to participate in leadership areas.

Women in both groups repeatedly expressed their commitment to their own families or to aging parents. And though many of the married women might have been financially independent, it was important to them to have their husbands' approval on their endeavors.

We know that large numbers of Mennonite women are a part of the work force in general. Many are working in professions, many hold clerical jobs in Mennonite businesses or other establishments, and a surprisingly large number are operating a business of their own. If this first exploration of one segment of this working force would encourage Mennonite women to express an interest in the activities of Mennonite Industries and Business Associates (MIBA) and a desire to become involved in that program, this *Report* will have been worthwhile.

In a recent telephone conversation with Leonard Geiser, executive secretary of MIBA, I was pleased to hear that in the past year attempts had been made for a more active involvement of women. Not so gratifying was the fact that women expressed great hesitancy and were not willing to contribute to the program as committee members or speakers.

One can understand this reluctance: many Mennonite women are still considerably intimidated by the idea of addressing Mennonite men. Denial of "authoritative" positions in the church for so long has left its mark. It takes time and experience to establish self-confidence in hitherto unexplored territory. So how might one begin?

Initially, and to create interest, three women from

diverse backgrounds could be invited by MIBA to join the committee. (One token woman in such an environment might not feel the freedom to express herself, but numbers provide strength.) These women could give input for topics to be dealt with in future publications and at future conferences. If there is a real desire on the part of MIBA and specific support in the way of advice, encouragement, and some finances, women can be counted on to participate. If this emphasis is publicized, women will attend the meetings, not just with their spouses to see the local sights and to shop, but as people seeking personal growth, new directions, and assistance in the complex problems they face in their professions and in business. It would be good news indeed to find this kind of interchange happening in this decade.—*Mary Dueck*

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Betty and Willard Thiessen of Winnipeg have been co-hosting an hour-long weekly Christian telecast for the past four years. Due to public demand, it is now seen daily. *Diane Kroeker*, Winnipeg, is the producer of a follow-up telecast for children called "Follow Me," running in its third season.

Hilda Dueck, a Mennonite Brethren in Winnipeg has organized a successful outreach, "Morning Out for Mothers" (MOM), where crafts, a guest speaker, and Bible study are provided every Wednesday morning. The book *The Freedom of Forgiveness* by David Augsburger has been used. Since its initiation, this program has been so popular, and the waiting list so long, that three more churches have organized a "MOM."

E. Jones-Dube (Botswana Agricultural College, Private Bag 0027, Gaborone, Botswana) is undertaking a research project on the status of women in Botswana. *Magda Pintens* (Kloosterstraat 57, 2750 Beveren, Belgium) is engaged in a study entitled "The Position of Women in Tanzania, Zambia, and Zaire," with emphasis on the legal situation of women. (From African Training and Research Center for Women)

A symposium on the changing status of Sudanese women convened at Ahfad University College for Women, Omdurman, Sudan, this past spring.

The first meeting of Latin American women was held in Bogota, Colombia, in August 1980.

Campus Ministry Women is a national (U.S.) organization of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish women working in the campus ministry. There is a bimonthly newsletter containing news of jobs, meetings, resources, and the organization. Address Glenda Prins, Coordinator, 802 Monroe, Ann Arbor, Mich., 48104.

Mahmuda Islam is doing a project on folk medicine and rural women in Bangladesh, and requests that others working on or interested in this field contact her c/o Mrs. Nazrul Islam, Institute of Social Studies, 251, Badhuisweg, PO Box 90733, The Hague, Holland 2509-LS. (From Women's Research and Resources Center, London)

The MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society convened in Chicago on November 20. Task force members (with affiliation and term expiration date) are *Bertha Beachy*, Goshen, Ind. (Mennonite Church, 1983); *Mary Dueck*, Fresno, Calif. (Mennonite Brethren, 1981); *Rosie Epp*, Wichita, Kan. (General Conference Mennonite, 1982); *Martha Smith Good*, New Hamburg, Ont. (Mennonite Church, 1982); *Edith Krause*, Vancouver, B.C. (General Conference Mennonite, 1982); *Elsa Redekopp*, Winnipeg, Man. (Mennonite Brethren, 1981); and *Anna Mary Brubacher*, advisory, Kitchener, Ont. (Mennonite Church).

If you have news and verbs that you would like to share with the other 1,300 readers of this Report, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, NE, 68516.—*Muriel Thiessen Stackley*

news and verbs

Emma Richards, co-pastor of Lombard Mennonite Church, Lombard, Ill., was Spiritual Emphasis Week speaker at Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Va., 28 September to 2 October. She spoke each morning and evening on themes from Matthew 22:34-40. She also served as resource person in a variety of seminars and classes in both the college and seminary.

June Suderman, Hillsboro, Kan., is on the executive committee of the Mennonite Central Committee Central States Advisory Board. The two other women on the 19-member board are *Violet Troyer*, Harper, Kan., and *Elda Martens*, Fairview, Ok.

Marilyn Miller, co-pastor of Arvada (Colo.) Mennonite Church, led the closing worship service at the General Conference Mennonite triennial sessions in Estes Park, July 1980.

Marguerite Martens has accepted duties as chaplain of the new Bethel Place Senior Citizens Residence, Winnipeg, Man.

Winona Rempel was commissioned this past autumn as lay minister of the Fort Garry Fellowship, Winnipeg

Review

Luce, S. (Carleton University). **Sex differences in achievement attributions reconsidered.** Presented at the symposium on "The role of expectation in gender-related behaviour," CPA, Calgary, June 1980.

Sex differences in attributed causes of achievement have been reported in a number of laboratory experiments. In reviewing the literature, both Deaux (1976) and Frieze (1975) reported that women are (1) less likely to attribute successful achievement to ability and (2) more likely to attribute failure to lack of ability than men. This is linked with finding of women's lower expectations for achievement on a variety of tasks despite no actual sex differences in performance.

Success for women, according to Deaux, is less expected, while failure is more expected than for men. Achievement attribution theory accounts for women's attribution patterns in that unexpected performance is less likely to be attributed to a stable cause (such as one's ability) than is expected performance according to the theory. Thus, the experimental findings appear to confirm one aspect of achievement attribution theory.

A second part of this theory deals with the consequences of certain patterns of achievement attributions. Thus Frieze postulated that women's attribution patterns result in their lower educational and occupational achievement when compared with men. She advocated programs for changing women's attributions to remedy the problem. Despite Frieze's enthusiasm, there is little data to support either the existence of sex differences in attributions in real achievement settings, and no studies have been done, even in the

laboratory, which established a causal link between attributions and achievement.

The two aims of the present study were, therefore, (1) to establish the existence of sex differences in attributions in a real achievement setting and (2) to discover whether there are causal links between earlier attributions and later achievement. The subjects were 132 university students, 80 males and 52 females, who were taking computing science courses and who volunteered to participate in a study of "factors affecting performance in courses." (Additional students served as controls to check that the attribution-making process did not affect performance.)

The results of this study were remarkable in that no consistent pattern of sex differences in achievement attributions were present, and no "causal predominance" of attributions over later performance was found using a cross-lagged panel analysis. Sex differences in expected performance for the first three of four assignments were found. The women had lower expectations without concomitant differences in attributions.

In light of the findings, the adequacy of achievement attribution theory is questioned. Further, the external validity of the experimental paradigm used to study sex differences in achievement attributions is also questioned. In the latter regard, the problem of jumping to conclusions about sex differences based almost entirely on experimental data is discussed. Finally, the need for more field studies of sex differences in cognitive processes is stressed. (From *Resources for Feminist Research*, July 1980, p. 5)

Which Way Women?

edited by Dorothy Yoder Nyce
Project of MCC Peace Section
Task Force on Women

Which Way Women? is a 156 page collection of 42 articles plus bibliographies and poetry, written predominantly by Mennonites and intended primarily for a Mennonite audience. Published midway through the International Women's Decade, the book materials cluster around the three major themes of International Women's Year- Equality, Development, and Peace.

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Letter

Dear Muriel: I didn't complete a questionnaire on myself. As director of an independent (private business enterprise) school, I'm deeply involved in business, albeit not a Mennonite one...Three years ago, shortly after we settled in Fresno after moving from Canada, I got restless and responded to an ad for a teacher's aide. I got the job and found utter chaos as far as program and organization was concerned. My boss was much more business than service oriented...I was soon asked to become director of faculty. I was in a new field, organizing planning and projecting and doing my utmost to make sure the students were getting what they had been promised. My boss [and I] had many clashes;...our ultimate goals were so different. He wanted to become rich, and I wanted to run a good intensive-English language school! In spite of our differences, he trusted me...There I was in management, dealing with educational agencies abroad and involved in public relations and promotion. I was sent on a promotion tour to the Middle East which again provided new experiences and challenges. But I felt that in the long run I would have to leave; our outlook on ethics in business was too divergent....Then a year ago a buyer came along...and my boss sold the school. The new president is a woman, a former international student counselor at the university with excellence as her goal. It didn't take long to discover that our aims for a good school were identical and the last nine months have been exciting. The students and their needs come first...It is a joy to interact with these young international people.

Having had supervision over women and men in the past years, I have run into problems with men on two occasions. Both were hired as teachers and both performed poorly in the classroom. The one...asked for a meeting with the (then) president and simply requested my position. Instead the president released him. From the other teacher, I experienced insubordination at

every turn...He simply could not accept a woman as "boss." After a year of this, he, too, was released. These two isolated cases have taught me to beware of such possibilities.

The former president always warned me "to be careful of the male ego." Finally, I had heard that statement once too often and I let him know that women also have egos...The matter of "male egos" never came up again.

For me, working in business has really been exciting...discovering specific strengths in the faculty and staff and capitalizing on these. Some people hate administration; I have found it a challenge.—*Mary Dueck, International English Institute, Fresno, CA (7 October 1980).*

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming Reports will focus on:

Women and Militarism. January-February 1981. Winifred Beechy and Janet Umble Reedy, coordinators.

Mentors and Role Models for Mennonite Women. March-April 1981. Katie Funk Wiebe, coordinator.

Mennonite Women Writers. May-June 1981. Elsa Redekopp, coordinator.

Are you aware of written or audio-visual resources on these topics? We would like to mention them in Report. Have you (or do you know someone who has) been researching or writing on these topics particularly as they relate to peace issues, Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, the Christian church? What actions have been taken in these areas in your community or by your congregation?

Send all such information to Editor, *Report*, 4830 Woodland Ave, Lincoln, Neb. 68516.

The Report is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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